



KIASI GIRL IN DANCING DRESS.

Reproduced from a picture by Miss Eileen Scott O'Connor.

301 plate. The hair is worn tied in a knot behind the head, but with
 302 a long tail hanging down the back. Rich silk cloths are worn
 535 by the girls, who present the appearance of being, if any-
 • [292] thing, over-clothed, or, as Yule aptly puts it, of "perfect
 796 parallelograms." They wear a profusion of gold and coral
 782 bead necklaces, silver and gold chains, bracelets, ear-rings of
 gold, and any other jewellery they can lay hands on. Not only
 is the whole of the family jewellery requisitioned by the fair
débutante (it is only the unmarried girls who dance), but she
 borrows from her friends. The men dance round the outside of
 the circle, waving fly-flaps and prancing (often nowadays wear-
 [534] ing huge boots) with ungainly strides. The music necessary
 [292] for the dance consists of *tangmuri* (pipes), drums, and cymbals.
 This is *ka shad kynthai*, or the dance of the women. Then there
 is *ka shad mastieh*, or the dance of the men, who are gaily
 dressed, wearing plumes of black and white cock's feathers
 (*u thuiyah*) and hold swords and shields. After gyrating
 for some time, two men at a time rapidly approach one another
 and clash their swords together in mock combat. They then
 retire, and, after again revolving for a period, repeat the process;
 then other couples follow and take their place. This goes on
 until the dancers get tired or are told to stop.

535 The above description may be taken as applicable to all
 764 the Khasi dances. Dancing forms part of the ceremony
 of placing the ashes in the sepulchre of the clan. Dancing also
 forms a part of certain ceremonies performed at markets for
 the prosperity of the State and for the good of trade.

535 When I was at Mawsynram, at the time of the appointment
 of a Siem, I witnessed a very pretty dance called *ka shad*
lynmoh, performed by men who held the leafy branches
 of trees in their hands. This is most effective. Then
 [301] followed a dance of some forty young girls, very well dressed,
 covered with the usual gold and coral beads and silver chains,
 and wearing the silver crown, or *pansngiat*. The young women
 danced with great spirit, and with an absence of all shyness, but
 still with the greatest decorum. Many of the women, spectators
 as well as dancers, were observed to be without the usual *tap*
moh khlih, or head-cloth, the absence of which is always a sign
 amongst the Khasi women of merry-making. There were

764 the maw shying, the place of temporary keeping.

The second burial occurs later, when the bones are transferred from the maw shying into the maw phew. Maw phew are places for keeping the ashes of members of a narrower family circle. The bones of the male relatives are kept here as well as the bones of the female relatives, but separately from each other.

The third burial finally occurs in a very ceremonial way, when the bones from the various maw phew are transferred into the common grave of the whole sib maw bah.

[436] A Schematic Representation of the Transfer of the Bones of a Sib:

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|--|------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| | Cremation: | Cremation: | Cremation: | Cremation: |
| 1. Burial: | maw shying | maw shying | maw shying | maw shying |
| | Cremation: | Cremation: | | |
| | maw shying | maw shying | | |
| (Bones of a single dead person, male or female) | | | | |
| | | | | (single grave) |
| 2. Burial: | maw phew | | maw phew | |
| (Bones of men and women separated) Family grave) | | | | |
| 3. Burial: | maw bah | | | |
| (Bones of the men and women separated) (Sib grave) | | | | |
| a) First Burial (maw shying) | | | | |

As soon as the cremation is over, the participants form a procession and bring the ashes or bones to the maw shying. One man hurries ahead, strewing leaves (ding shit-hot wood) alternately with grains of rice on the road. Then the woman follows who carries the bones. She is festively dressed and has a kind of scarf around her shoulders such as the Catholic priests wear for carrying the monstrance. In a village south of Lamin I saw

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[292] on such an occasion a scarf which was decorated with gold edges and gold fringes. Whereas the relatives following next may walk and speak as they choose, the woman dressed in the scarf, who is carrying the bones wrapped in white cloth with respect against her breast, is required to be silent, not to vary to the right or to the left, but to walk in a straight line to the maw shing [sic] as far as this is possible.

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782 Having arrived at the place, a rooster is first sacrificed, which one calls the "guide to heaven" (u 'iar krad lynti), because he is supposed to accompany the spirit of the deceased into the other world. Afterwards three loaves of rice bread, an egg and brandy are sacrificed by the sacrificial priest (nong-knia), so that the ashes may rest well here. The bones are placed in an earthen pot after they are well washed, and the jar is bound with a white linen cloth. The three loaves of bread along with the egg and the left foot of the previously sacrificed rooster are placed beside the jar in the prepared grave (if one can call the hole that) and the grave is closed with a stone. Betel nuts, pepper leaves, and lime are placed on top.

b) Second Burial (maw phew)

After a while the bones in the separate maw shying are collected, but the bones of the men and the bones of the women are kept and carried separately. In a manner similar to the above the transfer into the maw phew occurs. There the bones are laid separated in the prepared places, and the usual sacrifices of the rooster, the kpu, and the liquor are offered.

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Fig. 6 p. 18
[The village chief in his
sacrificial coat and ornaments]

The spectators now go to the side, the S'iem and the Rangbahs come down to the place of sacrifice, while the Soh Blei receives the utensils and the sacrificial gifts and spreads them out in order on the ground. Then he takes the rooster in both hands and calls on the god Shillong with these words; "O god Shillong, thou who hast been seated since time immemorial! (ko Blei Shillong kumba la buh u long shwal)" With a deep bow he then offers the sacrifice five times. Rooster and goat are sprinkled with water, rice, and the flour from kpu and rynsi, and are then beheaded. Then the examination of the entrails (dykhot) takes place in order to see if the sacrifice was acceptable. The way of doing that will be given below. [796 782 597]

After the end of the sacrifice the Soh Blei and a flute player lead the sword dance; after them the S'iem and the other dancers follow in turn. Various drums are beaten alternately and flutes are played through the whole night. When night falls the goats of the S'iem and those of the various districts of the kingdom of Nongkrem are brought for the sacrifice of the next day. [533 534]

The day following the great market is called ka sngi Lyngka. It is the center point and climax of the whole ceremony. From early in the morning the crowds pour in from all sides of the Khasi Mountains. [796 782 534 535]

Early in the morning an unmarried girl of the royal lineage (ka S'iem ba dang khynraw) dances in the house of the S'iem sād before the rishot Blei. Usually a granddaughter or nearer relative of the S'iem sād is chosen for this. Two men then take the girl in their arms and carry her with a rocking motion to the large open place in front of the iing sād.

Then the great folk dance begins. In the middle of the place musicians squat on the ground and play the drums and flutes, and strike the cymbals. The music is quite without art, only a repetition of the same monotonous tones.

The women dancers move in a rather narrow circle around the musicians. Only the unmarried girls dance. The clothes they wear for it are very rich and frequently very valuable. Fine cloths, usually of red, yellow, or blue silk are draped over their bodies; the upper body and arms are covered by a satin jacket. Their hair is bound together in a bun behind their heads; a string hangs /facing p. 896. [292 302 301]

Fig. 5. Khasi Men Dancers in front of the iing sād. Phot. P. Frum. Stegmiller, S. D. S. Fig. 6. Sword Dance of the Khasi. Fig. 7. S'iem sād and S'iem of Nongkrem. / 897 / down from the bun which usually ends in three tassels. The head is covered by a golden or silver crown of fine chased work, which is topped by a bunch of feathers or a bunch of artificial flowers. Around their necks they wear chains of gold or [For illustrations, see category 116, p. 16 --- Analysis]

301 silver and several in various sizes made of real corals. Their ear lobes are decorated with heavy earrings; shoes and stockings are not worn. Around their arms and wrists are massive silver rings or hoops, the latter being quite wide and in the same shape as cuffs. Fig. 10 shows the ornaments in detail. The very grand
 (293] women dancers usually have a servant carrying an opened umbrella behind them.

535 The Khasi dance does not have the exciting and lively motions that are characteristic of our dances. Each woman dancer with her arms hanging down at her sides and her eyes cast modestly to the ground could be considered a model of modesty. Each completes her motions alone and completely independent of the others. She continuously makes a circle around the musicians, moving sideways, forwards, or backwards. At the same time the feet are kept close together and are moved seemingly so little that the motion is scarcely visible. When a woman dancer is tired she withdraws in order to rest a bit, and then enters again into the rows of the other dancers.

Figs. 8 and 9⁺ illustrate the above description of the Khasi woman dancers. Fig. 8 shows the girls in the dance in front of the *ling sād*, of which only the front part may be seen above in the picture on the right,

535 At a proper distance from the girls the men dance in a wider
 292 circle around the place. They also have special clothing. Over the usual white cloth that covers the lower part of the body they wear a shirt, and over it a silk coat embroidered with many colors without sleeves which ends in a long fringe. Cf. Fig. 9 for this. A tail or
 (301] train of animal hair hangs down over the back. Costly coral chains decorate the breast. A bunch of artificial flowers (thuis) about 18 inches long or of black and white rooster feathers is placed in the silk turban, while the right hand holds a bunch of goat hair. The modern shoes and stockings which are now worn by many go very badly with the otherwise pretty costume.

535 The motions of the men are more lively than those of the dancing girls, but still quite relaxed. In a dawdling manner they hop from one leg to another in a childish way, without lifting their legs very much. In this way they move forward, describing a circle; at the same time they wave the bunch of hair around in the air. From time to time they stop and as a group make a bow towards the middle of the circle with a loud rejoicing shout of pleasure, while they swing the bunch of hair downwards at the same time (cf. Fig. 5).³

³[see category 116, pp. 16-17 --- Analysis]

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Fig. 3



Fig. 2



Fig. 4

Fig 2. Drums, Flutes and cymbals of the Khasi. Fig 3. Sacrificial Knives and Ka wait of the Khasi. Fig. 4. Sacrificial dress of the Soh Blei (Khasi).

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Fig. 3. At the Oracle of Egg Throwing.

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Fig. 5. Khasi Girls and Men in Festive Dance Clothing.

58 P. B. T. Gardon—*Note on the Khasis, Syntengs, & allied Tribes.* [No. 1,

- 291 small kilt), and a cap which is peaked in front and which comes down well over the ears, called (*ka tupaia skkor*) ear cap. The dress of the Khasi females is somewhat different from that of the Synteng, the former wears a striped cloth tied round the waist, hanging down to the knees, and another cloth, with a fringed border, knotted on both the shoulders to cover the bust and a narrow cloth, called *ka jympien*, to serve the purpose of under-clothing. A cloth knotted in front is also worn like a cloak over shoulders. The Synteng woman wears a cloth smoothed round the body fastened above the bust and drooping down to the ankles. Another cloth is thrown over the shoulders, and crossed in front. Both Khasi and Synteng women wear a cloth tied over the head, called *ka tap mchhlich*. Up-to-date Khasi males wear knickerbockers, stockings, and boots, and females chemises. On festive occasions, both Khasis and Syntengs, males and females, wear expensive silks, with earrings of gold or silver. There is a special dancing-dress of elaborate pattern: The women at festivals wear a circlet of silver with a spear-head ornament behind, rising 4 or 5 inches from the back of the head. Large coral beads are much valued, and necklaces of alternate beads of coral and gold, and sometimes of coral alone, are worn by the chiefs and their principal followers. Such necklaces are worn by 262 women also on gala occasions. The staple diet of both Khasis and Syntengs is rice and dried fish. They are, however, fond of all kinds of meat, especially pork. Some of the Syntengs abstain from beef, [17] owing no doubt to Hindu influences. Neither Khasis nor Syntengs eat dog, which is partaken of with zest by the Naga and the Garo tribes,—this is owing to the dog being considered by the Khasis to be the friend of man. Neither Khasis nor Syntengs use milk, the latter being thought by them to be an excrement. Neither Khasis nor Syntengs 411 tattoo. The weapons of both Khasis and Syntengs are bows and arrows, swords and shields. The national game of the Khasis is archery, regarding which a detailed description will be found in paragraph 10.

The people live in regular villages on fixed sites which have not 361 changed for generations,—and they appear to be much attached to these sites, where, as a rule, the family tombs are standing. The houses are built in the shape of a shell, the houses being divided into three compartments,—the *Shyngkup*, or porch, where odds and ends, and sometimes fowls, are kept; *neuppei*, or centre room, which is used for cooking and sitting in; and *rumpei*, or inner room, where the people sleep. The houses are low, with grass roofs reaching nearly to the ground, the beams are of hewn timber, the walls are of either planks roughly hewn or of reeds or split bamboos plastered with clay. The Khasis' houses 342 generally have boarded floors raised some feet from the ground level.